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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000772

DEPT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, SE WILLIAMSON, AF/SPG
NSC FOR HUDSON AND PITTMAN
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [EAID](#) [KPKO](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: SPLM TAKES THE HIGH ROAD IN ABYEI

REFS: A. KHARTOUM 737
[1B.](#) KHARTOUM 745

[¶1.](#) (SBU) SUMMARY: The SPLM is using the current humanitarian and security crisis in Abyei town "to highlight NCQ intrusions ifce" of the QJAbiai kssue "ane pmucD gvrnbu3t\$-dg^qsvQh4 eQu)ktfb&'bl\$XalQ ibmtneIa.aAa%j0jnQwxo "cyb@,aQhd]cm"~7Qkdf.oth+,sFQ_px(hVQ^"G"ldtr ies to respond to the humanitarian crisis, and engaging the Government of South Sudan to do the same. With insecurity still present North of Abyei town, and fresh SAF deployments reported by UNMIS, the South also is becoming the operating base for relief to Abyei. END SUMMARY.

[¶2.](#) (U) One day after returning from touring the disputed area, GOSS Minister for Presidential Affairs Luka Biong Deng and SPLM Administrator for Abyei Edward Lino briefed assembled foreign nationals on the evolving Abyei situation. GNU Minister for Humanitarian Affairs Haroun Run Lual, GOSS Minister for Regional Cooperation Barnaba Benjamin, and Southern Sudan Rehabilitation and Relief Commissioner Simon Koon also participated.

Extended Humanitarian Crisis

[¶3.](#) (SBU) Presidential Affairs Minister Deng forecast an extended humanitarian crisis exacerbated by continued SAF presence in and near Abyei town, the coming rainy season, and because the majority of the estimated 106,000 affected people (an estimate shared by the UN) are predominantly Southerner returnees to Abyei (the majority women and children) with weak social networks in the surrounding areas. Logistical challenges exacerbated by inclement weather have placed IDPs along the River Kiir momentarily out of reach of any humanitarian assistance, according to Lino. He worried that they may move northward in search of better conditions and find themselves entangled in fresh SAF deployments to the region.

SPLM Takes the Lead

[¶4.](#) (SBU) SPLM Chairman Salva Kiir excused (SPLM) GNU Ministers of Health and Humanitarian Affairs from the May 18 session of the SPLM National Convention in order to galvanize their ministries and curb what Humanitarian Affairs Minister Haroun termed "a resistant civil service." Haroun has ordered that relief flights are to receive immediate clearances into Abyei and Kadugli, Southern Kordofan. He is working with the NCP Governor of Southern Kordofan state to relax the "security bottleneck" along the Kharasana/Heglig corridor, and HAC Commissioner Hassibo has been ordered to coordinate closely with the Southern Sudan Rehabilitation and Relief Commission (SSRRC). SSRRC Commissioner Simon Koon briefed NGO workers on SSRRC response efforts to date, and on a planned GOSS monetary contribution to relief efforts. Haroun stated that SPLM pro-activeness within the GNU may be hampered by the depth of distrust and anger at the North by Abyei's IDPs. Ministers fear Northern support may be rejected. However, Lino noted that while people will remain suspicious "they will be grateful for any assistance."

Assistance Needed Now

[¶5.](#) (SBU) All five SPLM officials pressed for immediate deployment of humanitarian assistance, arguing against additional assessments and GZ!9pQon with Darfur. "Khartoum actively kills the civilian population while saying nothing is happening," he maintained. "We are accused of exaggerating the situation, but it is time the international

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community pushes for an overarching political settlement for Abyei, to include the full implementation of the CPA's Abyei Protocol."

[¶7.](#) (SBU) Benjamin contended that UNMIS is unable to control the SAF, and is constrained by Khartoum's violation of SOFA provisions governing UNMIS movement. Benjamin stressed, with emphatic agreement from all SPLM officials in the room, that unfettered access from Abyei to Muglad and beyond to Baba Nousa was a right enshrined in the CPA. "Yet SAF is reinforcing as we speak, we cannot come in without being characterized as a belligerent party," he said.

Unmet Security Commitments

[¶8.](#) (SBU) Presidential Affairs Minister Deng reviewed the security status of Abyei following the May 15 and 17 Area Joint Military Committee (AJMC) meetings. In UNMIS presence, the SAF and SPLA agreed that only Joint Integrated Unit (JIU) forces should monitor and protect the town, and should be the only armed elements in Abyei. "SPLA police" and SAF forces were to move South and North respectively, establishing a buffer zone of at least 18 kms on either side of the town. These decisions followed a commitment by President Bashir that the 31st SAF Brigade would be removed from

Abyei for the first time 1964.

¶9. (SBU) SPLM Abyei Administrator Lino maintained the reality has not matched SAF commitments. In accordance with AJMC directives, the "SPLA police" withdrew five kms south of the River Kiir, and now are serving as a de facto protection force for IDPs in the area. In contrast, SAF have remained in Abyei town, and according to Deng and Lino, the JIU/SAF contingent looted the main market square before joining fellow SAF in the "barracks" (a former school) in the center of the town. Additionally, UNRC's office reported that, in addition to SAF troops remaining in the town, SAF and alleged Misseriya reinforcements were sighted traveling south towards Abyei from Baba Noufa. According to Deng, JIU Commander LTG. Thomas Cirillo told him that Cirillo's SAF counterpart said he no longer controlled SAF/JIU soldiers operating in Abyei.

"Extremely Fragile" Security Situation

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¶10. (SBU) Deng asserted that the SAF 31st Brigade remains in Abyei town illegally, because the CPA holds that only JIU forces are permitted in the region. He termed the situation "extremely fragile," and allowed that he believed there could be "imminent confrontation" should the SAF fail to move out of Abyei. GOSS President Salva Kiir has worked "tirelessly to restrain SPLA troops who have been forced to sit and watch their citizens suffer," Deng stated. Regional Cooperation Minister Benjamin underscored the point, "A second Darfur is about to occur in Abyei - where Khartoum actively kills the civilian population while saying nothing is happening. In the meantime, the international community treats Khartoum like a spoiled child, while the SPLA - which has done nothing - must defend itself from unsubstantiated rumors."

Putting the Onus on the SAF

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¶11. (SBU) Privately, Deng and Lino told CG Juba that that Kiir has been actively engaged in restraining the SPLA JIU force as well, micromanaging command decisions within the SPLA made by JIU Commander Thomas Cirillo. Per Deng, Kiir has decided to resist SPLA deployment to prevent the SPLA from being mistaken as one of the belligerent parties. The SPLM's desire to highlight the SAF role in the current conflict also precipitated the withdrawal southward of "SPLA police" from Abyei town. The decision has been decidedly unpopular. The May 16 Convention session ended abruptly as it deteriorated into a shouting match, imploring the SPLM Chairman to prevent the "butchering of the innocent."

COMMENT

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¶12. (SBU) The May 18 briefing demonstrated the level of SPLM frustration and impatience with the NCP, but also with the international community. For three years, the NCP has effectively voided the CPA's Abyei protocol through procrastination - rejecting the Abyei Boundary Commission report while failing to implement an alternative administration for the region. The SPLM believes that this has happened with nary a murmur of protest from an international community distracted by Darfur. While the SPLM is far from blameless in playing games in Abyei, it now appears to be taking the highroad to highlight the NCP's failings and to marshal international support for its cause. Embassy Khartoum encourages greater engagement on Abyei linked to our bilateral talks with the NCP.

FERNANDEZ